LC/NAIROBI

Distr.:
LIMITED

ECA/PADIS/RTC/I/4
1 March 1985

Original: FRENCH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

First Meeting of the Regional
Technical Committee for PADIS

26 to 27 March 1985, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL CO-OPERATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM

4. Establishment of a Regional Co-operative Information System

1. The PADIS project was conceived in April-May 1980 to provide a technical response to the needs expressed by African countries for the establishment of a continental co-operative system providing access to the information needed for the development of Africa.

2. In order to process (collate, analyse, store and distribute)the various types of information required (numerical and non-numerical) a system of data bases was envisaged within the project, comprising sub-systems and sub-system "components", as described below.

3. This structure of sub-systems and components was designed in 1980 to simplify the establishment of international co-operation agreements on the various aspects and types of information to be processed and to identify bodies likely to participate in the PADIS project in Africa, in keeping with their responsibilities and functions. The structure of the system was finalized during the period 1981-1982 on the basis of all requests expressed by member States made either directly to the project Management or indirectly through ECA substantive Divisions.

4. By the end of 1982, the global structure envisaged for PADIS was as follows:

5. (a) PADIS bibliographic references sub-system comprising:

(a.1) - PADIS-DEV, a bibliographic component concerning development sciences (originally called DEVSIS-Africa), managed by the Central Co-ordination Office of the Project (PADIS/CCO);

(a.2) - PADIS-COM, a component consisting of all the bibliographic data bases prepared by the competent bodies at international, regional, subregional and national levels, collected and

made available to member States with the agreement of the Organizations responsible for producing the data (sectors not covered by PADIS DEV).

6. (b) PADIS reference and descriptive data sub system comprising:

(b.1) - PADIS-CORE, a component concerning analytical descriptions of experts, institutions and activities connected with African countries, carried out under the programme for Technical Co-operation Among Developing Countries (TCDC)

(b.2) - PADIS-PROM, a component comprising detailed descriptions of projects related to development in Africa along with their management and monitoring (work plans, budgets, etc.).

7. (c) PADIS sub-system concerning numerical and quantitative data comprising:

(c.1) - PADIS-STAT, a component consisting of a statistical data base prepared by the ECA Statistics Division;

(c.2) - PADIS-TEND, a component concerning a quantitative technical data base on products concerning the African market to be drawn-up in accordance with specifications provided by the ECA International Trade and Finance Division.

8. (d) A sub system comprising all the data bases which can be made available to African countries through agreements under the PADIS project, particularly in the field of scientific and technical information.

It consists of a single component:

(d.1) - PADIS-STISD, all the scientific and technical data bases deemed useful for development in African countries.

9. As at 20 February 1985, the PADIS system had reach the following stage of implementation:

- PADIS-DEV, A department called the Computerized Documentation Section CDS has been set-up in the PADIS Central Co ordination Office (PADIS/CCO). A 5,000 item bibliographic file which can be accessed on-line by the MINISIS conversation mode software. Agreements have been made with Guinea, the Niger the Botswana on the supply of information to the PADIS-DEV data base. This data base has been used to print specialized indexes (DEVINDEX). There is an on-going programme to microcopy (on microfiches) all the primary documents contained in the PADIS-DEV base.

- PADIS-COM. Agreements have been made with the International Labour Office (ILO) and the United Nations Department of International Economic and Social Affairs (UNDIESA) to feed into the PADIS data-processing system the ILIS and DIS bibliographic data bases produced by those bodies. This input has not yet been entered in the files by MINISIS because of the lack of necessary disc space.

- PADIS-CORE. A section called PADIS/TCDC has been set up in the PADIS/CCO and a reference file listing 8,000 African experts is available and can be accessed on-line with MINISIS.

- PADIS-STAT. A data analysis and production unit has been set up in in the ECA Statistics Division. The PADIS-STAT statistical data

base is operational and has 60,000 chronological statistical sets of social, demographic and economic data as well as data on foreign trade. The software (IMAGE 3,000) and hardware was supplied by the PADIS Computer Centre.

- PADIS PROM, PADIS-TEND, PADIS-STISD. These components have not yer been established due to lack of personnel and adequate funds.

10. The PADIS system is based on the following technical principles:

- A very clear distinction is made between the types of information to be processed and appropriate components for the system are created;

- The preparation of data bases for each component is in keeping with any existing international standards;

- Collection of primary documents on microfiches covering the documentary units analysed by PADIS bibliographic files will be gradually constituted in order to form the nucleus of an African clearing-house for primary documents

- Agreements between PADIS and all organizations of the United Nations system having operational programmes in the documentation and information fields will be established;

- Co-operation machinery between member countries will be studied in order to set up, progressively, networks (in the broad sense) for information collection, analysis and dissemination;

- A study will be made of the need to establish subregional centres as decentralized infrastructures for the Central Co-ordination Office (PADIS/CCO), in agreement with member States and in accordance with their wishes;

- Appropriate plans for the training of specialists will be made;

- A Pan African information dissemination network project will be prepared.

11. These general technical principles are the automatic outcome of the DEVSIS Africa feasibility study as incorporated and amended in the document on the Pan African Information and Documentation System (PADIS) which was submitted and approved at the seventh meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers in Freetown, Sierra Leone in May 1981.

12. On the basis of these principles, the PADIS immediate objectives were clearly defined as set out in document 3.1, paragraphs 38/42.

13. The general work plan for the PADIS project consists of the following three phases:

- Phase I (1980 1981), comprising the establishment of PADIS/CCO and its interconnection with the EURONET network through the ESRIN centre at Frascati;

- Phase II (1982-1984), aimed as developing the various components described above, increasing the capacity of the PADIS/CCO Computer Centre and preparing the preliminary project for the PADIS-NET network;

- Phase III (1985 1989), constituting the final establishment of the PADIS system and PADIS NET network to ensure participation by the maximum number of member States from the African region.

At the present time, (February 1985), designated for commencement of phase III, the system and network have reached the following stage:

- The system: PADIS/CCO and its computer centre are ready. Four components (DEV, COM, CORE and STAT) out of the seven planned for the programme (DEV, COM, PROM, CORE, STAT, TEND and STISD) are finished or currently under way. It is essential to increase efforts to finish the components in progress and to complete the entire programme.

- The network: The project to establish a telephone interconnection with networks and information systems outside Africa (for example, EURONET) has not gone beyond the preliminary study stage, in view of the technical difficulties entailed in such an ambitious projects, the credits available and the priorities laid down by member States. A precise and detailed technical feasibility study is now essential.

- Co-operation agreements: During the second phase, PADIS acquired the experience to implement co-operation agreements with Guinea, the Niger and Botswana for the PADIS-DEV component. This experience has been useful in preparing co-operation agreements at continental level to give the PADIS-DEV component a Pan-African dimension. Furthermore, the experience will help in pointing the way to solutions applicable to the other components of the system.